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ABSTRACT

Educational change or innovation in the California State University and Colleges System is outlined in this paper within the framework of the program for Innovation and Improvement in the Instructional Process. Within this framework, two groups have primary responsibility: (1) the administrators on each of the 19 campuses who act as primary liaison persons for the program, and (2) the staff of the Division of New Program Development and Evaluation in the Chancellor's Office who administer this special state grant program. This paper summarizes the meeting in October 1975 of coordinators regarding their roles and the problems they face. Among the topics discussed are methods of defusing faculty apprehension about new approaches to teaching and learning; approaches to encourage faculty to take advantage of the opportunities the program provides; assisting the project directors when the proposal has been approved to get the project underway; and mechanisms for dissemination of information on what is being tested, how it is faring, and the results. (JMF)

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Change Agent in a Multicampus System

Change in higher education, sometimes appropriately termed innovation, has many causes. For some it is an exercise in survival – programmatic, psychological or occupational. These persons are led to engage in innovation out of fear (loss of jobs), discomfort (loss of effectiveness) or boredom (loss of enthusiasm). Others welcome the opportunities afforded by change as a challenge to their creativity in their continuing efforts to assure excellence in the academic program. Whether the immediate stimulus is declining enrollments, increasingly "tight" support budgets or a new and exciting idea, movement toward change has been enhanced in recent years.

Change is not, of course, new to academe. In the past, typical changes have been in individual courses and have involved isolated professors revising content or modifying formats. What *is* new is the extent of change being undertaken in response to new societal demands and increased diversity among the students entering our institutions. This, in turn, means that individual and uncoordinated efforts, though they remain valuable and important, no longer are, in and of themselves, sufficient. It is this phenomenon that has given rise to several programs with the specific purpose of stimulating and assisting faculty in testing and implementing new approaches to teaching and learning. Best known of these is the Federal Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (HEW). Other incentive grant funds have operated in Oregon, New York, California and elsewhere in recent years.

Any organized attempt to stimulate change depends on the people charged with that responsibility. In The California State University and Colleges program for Innovation and Improvement in the Instructional Process two groups have that responsibility – the administrators on each of the nineteen campuses who act as primary liaison persons for the program and the staff of the Division of New Program Development and Evaluation in the Chancellor's Office who administer this special state grant program.

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It was recognized at the beginning of the Innovative Program that a coordinated effort to encourage innovation would be best accomplished through creation of a unit in the system's headquarters to administer the grant competition and provide a focus for network building and information dissemination.

On the other hand, the role of the campus liaison person or coordinator for innovation was not clearly delineated and today is less than fully defined. While it would be overstating the point to say the coordinator's position has "grown like Topsy," it *has* developed in a variety of ways, in considerable measure reflecting different institutional settings and needs.

A major evaluation of the Program was undertaken by Harold "Bud" Hodgkinson (now director of the National Institute of Education) and Howard Levine in 1975. They placed particular emphasis on the key role played by the coordinator and urged that greater attention be paid to its nurture by the system. In partial response, a major feature of the program of the semi-annual meeting of coordinators in San Francisco in October, 1975, was a session led by a panel of the more 'senior" (in term of service) coordinators, during which they discussed their roles and the problems they face. The remainder of this paper is a distillation of that panel together with observations made independently by campus and central office personnel.

Getting Started

Change, whether curricular or administrative, is threatening too many, if not most, faculty. When that change is directly related to how courses are taught and involves significant shifts in the role of the professor, it may be seen as both a personal and professional affront. The first step in getting a program started, that is, to test new approaches to teaching and learning, is to defuse, to the extent possible, faculty apprehensions as to both *what* is being tried and *why*.

This is made still more difficult if the program being implemented is sponsored by the headquarters office for a multi-campus system. Illustrative is the comment of one coordinator: "I think the faculty on my campus conceived the program as really a plot (by the Chancellor's Office, the Board of Trustees, the Governor) to 'get' teachers in general and to cut their jobs in particular." Since assurances to the contrary from headquarters are often received with skepticism, the crucial role the coordinator plays in establishing the respectability of the program is apparent. The degree to which the coordinator is successful will depend on his or her commitment to the worth and importance of innovation, well-developed skills in interpersonal relations, the respect of colleagues and some knowledge of the campus political scene and lines of both formal and informal authority. Some knowledge of the budget processes also comes in handy.

These attributes illustrate what might be termed the "go-between" function of the coordinator. He or she should be able to work easily and well with faculty and administrators as well as with the central office staff. Though referred to as "campus coordinators for innovation" in the CSUC program, the designation of a title

is of some importance in carrying out this facilitating role on the campus. Where others may have reason to view themselves as having at least an equal claim to such a title, problems may arise which could be avoided by use of alternatives such as "campus contact person" or "Innovative Fund Liaison Person".

Whatever the title, the individual chosen must have broad credibility with all parties to the program processes. His or her presence should lend legitimacy to them. An important ingredient in establishing this legitimacy is an emphasis on the quality objectives of the program, making clear the program does not seek change for its own sake or place primary stress on reducing costs, but encourages change that improves the educational process and enhances the quality of teaching and learning.

Stress should be placed from the beginning, as it has been in the CSUC program, on faculty initiation of proposals to test the worth of such changes. Many perceive this kind of program, whether campus-based or originating in headquarters, as less an incentive grant program than an administratively managed effort to lure faculty into approving changes that are to their disadvantage. The coordinator, as an administrator, may be only slightly less suspect in this respect than someone in the Chancellor's Office. One way of enhancing his or her effectiveness is by careful development of a network of key faculty in a number of schools and departments across the campus. These persons, convinced of the academic and professional worth of the program, not only will lend greater weight to the coordinator's own credibility and that of the program, but often act as catalysts to the development of quality proposals to the Fund.

Grant Preparation

The coordinator has the responsibility for publicizing the program and encouraging faculty to take advantage of the opportunities it provides. A number of strategies may be used: a workshop may be held to which all interested are invited and during which explanations of the program are provided as well as observations and suggestions from successful applicants aired. The latter are particularly helpful in demonstrating the possibility of success as well as in providing advice on do's and don'ts of proposal preparation. Some coordinators have invited members of the NPD&E staff to join the workshop sessions and stay on to meet individually with persons who contemplate formulating a proposal.

Print is used more generally to "get the word out". Posters may be placed in department offices, flyers in faculty mail boxes and articles outlining the criteria and guidelines for the program placed in faculty bulletins or campus newspapers. Copies of the criteria and guidelines may be distributed to all department chairs.

Once the preparation stage is reached, coordinators have adopted a number of different strategies. Four approaches have been employed most frequently:

- The coordinator acts largely as facilitator, but plays little or no role in the evaluation of proposals. He/she sees to it the program is publicized, answers questions about the scope of the Fund activities, the preparation of recommended budgets and about what has been supported in past years and helps to obtain necessary approvals prior to transmission.

- The coordinator does those things listed above, but also acts as friendly critic of ideas, preliminary outlines and draft documents. He/she may assist in the writing of the proposal and development of the evaluation design, anticipating problems or questions that might arise in the reviewers' minds.

- Another approach extends to actually seeking out proposals felt to be of particular interest to the Program under the published guidelines.

- The coordinator on some campuses participates in the review process by which decisions are reached on which proposals are to be forwarded for consideration by the Task Force. This may be informal (sitting in on sessions of the campus review body) or more formalized through recommendations to the president or his/her designee.

Selection of any of these strategies depends on the judgment of the coordinator. His or her best operating style must be considered. The time available given other demands (the coordinator has other prior functions and receives no additional resources when asked to function in this capacity as well) helps to determine the extent to which the more demanding strategies may be employed. Finally, the campus milieu must be considered. Is a high or low profile more likely to be successful? What are the commitments of administration and faculty leaders to program objectives? What campus procedures were adopted earlier which now function as guides for the coordinator? These and other considerations must be weighed in selecting the most effective approach for the campus.

Post Notification

Once notification is received on campus, on both successes and non-successes, the role of the coordinator is fairly straightforward. Where the proposal has been approved, he or she assists the project director and the staff of NPD&E in the development of the final budget. This may involve negotiations with the department or departments concerned, and with the school and institution on resources to be devoted to the project (known as the institutional contribution). Assistance also may be required in processing the grant from the headquarters to the institution. Such matters as arranging for reassigned time, securing needed space, coping with campus, system and State procedures for procuring equipment and the like are often handled by the coordinator for a project director who often has had little experience with them.

Other kinds of services may be provided the unsuccessful applicant. Often the coordinator, if convinced of the worth

of the proposed project, will encourage submission to other possible sources of support such as Federal agencies and private foundations. He or she may suggest specific possibilities and recommend modifications of the proposal to make it more likely to fit external agency funding priorities. Mini-grant funds may provide an alternative if the proposal is within State guidelines and the level of funding required can be reduced. Request for support for some projects may receive a favorable response from community groups, service clubs and alumni associations. Limited support of a variety of types may be obtained from the institution, school or department. Even very limited resources may reap large rewards for someone who has spent much time in the development of a proposal and does not want to see the effort "wasted".

The function of the coordinator does not stop with the rush of getting projects underway. Problems arise regularly, sporadically or occasionally depending on the nature and complexity of the project. From shifts in budget lines through selection of an external evaluator to strategies for continuing the program once external funding has ceased, the role expands and lengthens.

Spreading the Word

This is nowhere more apparent than in dealing with the widely recognized problems associated with information dissemination. What proves successful at one institution very often is unknown at others. Examples can be cited where departments at one institution and even professors in the same department have suffered from the same "information gap". A major item on any coordinator's agenda should be development of ways to assure wide dissemination of information on what is being tested, how it is faring and the results. The coordinator's office should be an effective clearing house for getting information to faculty and administrators and responding to inquiries about innovation.

Several mechanisms may be used to accomplish this objective. One coordinator publishes a newspaper in pamphlet format which is distributed to all faculty. Each issue describes three or four projects briefly, the problem addressed, how the process works and results obtained. As an invitation to follow up, a slip of paper is inserted which the faculty member may use to request further information, either in written form or in a workshop.

The "showcase" or workshop approach is used frequently, though with mixed results. Experience seems to indicate smaller institutions respond more positively to it, possibly because there is a more established pattern of faculty interaction upon which it may build. Faculty retreats have been used less often, largely due to the extensive planning required and the cost to the program or individual. Where tried, they have had considerable success. These may be general meetings with breakdown sessions devoted to aspects of an issue or problem or may be more limited in size and focused on a specific topic.

A variation on the workshop and retreat formats is the "innovation fair". It may be possible to use vacation breaks to mount two to five day programs on a series of issues related to teaching, learning and innovation. Where this has been tried, the faculty response has been quite favorable.

In setting up a retreat or workshop or "fair" the selection of program participants to act as "experts" or consultants is crucial. Should there by any? If so, who should they be? Experience varies, but as a rule it seems more dependence should be placed on what might be termed local talent than on imported consultants. Though this runs counter to the adage that a prophet is without honor in his own house, there is a fairly general expectation among faculty that "home grown" innovation is more likely to have application to other local programs than approaches tested elsewhere, no matter how favorable the results. The extent to which outside persons should be used will vary, however, and an especially dynamic speaker or honored member of the profession or subject discipline may well be quite helpful.

The coordinator, to perform this function effectively, should have up-to-date and at least reasonably comprehensive information about what is taking place in innovation. Ideally, this should extend beyond knowledge of campus programs or even system efforts to the national scene. One good source is NEXUS, the information clearing house sponsored by the American Association of Higher Education and funded in part by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. Staff at NEXUS collects and provides a rapid response to anyone calling their office in Washington, D.C. about key persons and programs in specific areas. Emphasis is placed on finding resource persons within the caller's region so that information may be exchanged, even visits arranged, more readily.

Another useful source is to be found in periodicals. Several deal generally with innovation. The well-established *Change Magazine* and the recently initiated journal, *Alternative Higher Education*, are examples. "Future Talk," the quarterly newsletter prepared by the Division of New Program Development and Evaluation, also provides updated information about projects supported by the Fund for Innovation and other programs both within the CSUC system and nationwide. Other newsletters deal in depth with more limited subject matter; the best known of these is probably the PSI newsletter published by the Center for Personalized Instruction at Georgetown University. A small library of such publications located in the coordinator's office and accessible to faculty will encourage greater contact with potential and even practiced innovators. An alternative is to place such materials in a faculty development center, or in a special area in the library, where they are readily accessible.

Though often overlooked, the campus newspaper or faculty bulletin may be an effective means of highlighting innovation. Feature articles often are welcomed by student editors. The same may be said of community newspapers, particularly in smaller towns or suburban areas.

The Other Side

Though some mention already has been made of problems facing coordinators, two should be mentioned

more specifically. Probably the most often cited is time. As noted earlier, the coordinator usually is asked to add this function to his or her existing workload. Though committed to the objectives of the program and willing to undertake responsibility for it, agreeing to wear this new "hat" usually carries no added or special support. The situation differs from campus to campus and depends on the kinds of duties already performed, as well as the "mix" of services which are associated with the program. In general, it may be said that tasks tend to multiply, though establishing routines for their handling helps. In the CSUC program, the addition of the mini-grant program through which small grants are processed entirely on the local campus has placed added responsibility on the coordinators. Advising potential proposers on foundation and Federal sources of possible support (on those campuses where no other office provides this service) requires considerable effort, particularly in keeping abreast of current funding priorities, not to mention deadlines.

With the growth in both the number of responsibilities and their complexity, coordinators generally feel some additional support should be provided. Modest allocations for secretarial assistance and/or a part-time administrative assistant are usually cited as most needed. Reassigned time is mentioned less often since that option is really not open; (this could be accomplished by "reassigning" existing campus duties, but it is not, in most instances, a realistic alternative).

Some coordinators also feel themselves in a difficult position where departmental or institutional policies on retention, promotion and tenure (RPT) fail to recognize the value of instructionally related innovative activities. Though by no means a universal problem, since CSUC system policy gives high priority to undergraduate teaching excellence, a number of instances could be cited where faculty have said their departments and institution review committees either do not take such work into consideration or construe it negatively. Where these conditions exist, efforts should be made by local administrations to enlarge the applicable criteria to encompass such projects.

Conclusion

Levels of bureaucracy can either help or hinder innovation. Those who experiment in the face of administrative opposition may well prefer insulation from the prying eyes of higher administrators. Where the administration, local or systemwide, is supportive, the problem is to make that support both visible and effective. In the CSUC program two countervailing pressures contend, as they will in other multi-campus systems employing the same general strategy. The fact the program is centrally administered raises apprehensions as to motives; the fact it encourages creative efforts to improve the educational process provides leverage for those who find themselves contending with local pressures for conformity and the status quo. The coordinator is at the confluence of these pressures. He or she must provide needed support to imaginative faculty while reducing to the extent possible the onus of central office sponsorship.

At the risk of constructing an impossible ideal, the coordinator should:

- have a commitment to the importance of innovation and the worth of the grant program
- possess a working knowledge of current programs and approaches being employed in the system, the State and nation
- be respected by colleagues and well-known on campus
- have a good knowledge of the politics of the campus, the formal and informal lines of authority and influence
- possess some minimal knowledge of budgetary procedures
- be energetic

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Innovation in teaching and learning does not take place in a system headquarters; it is found where there are students to learn and be taught, where there are faculty to facilitate the process. A headquarters staff, however well intentioned, cannot provide the regular, sometimes daily, advice and counsel necessary. They do not possess the time or the knowledge of local conditions required. Though a cliche, the "trenches" are the campuses and it is on the campuses the support must be visibly and readily available. Central staff may help in dealing with system policies and questions. They may give advice and provide monetary support. But most problems arise out of campus policies, procedures and personnel. What form to use in securing materials or equipment, what office to approach for advice on budget matters, how to process a policy recommendation through the administration or academic senate – these are most often best handled by the coordinator, the local "friend at court". Alternately strong right arm or warm and sympathetic shoulder, he or she is the person to turn to when problems are to be solved or prospects to be enhanced.

To sum it up, one coordinator capsulized the process and the attitude required when she said: "You cannot demand innovation; it is something to be nurtured."

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This occasional paper was prepared by David H. Provost, Dean, New Program Development and Evaluation. It is based on a discussion among coordinators for the California State University and Colleges Fund for Innovation and Improvement in the Instructional Process at San Francisco on October 23, 1975.

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